

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE C-7

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
7 August 1983

The prisoner's secret Spy mystery surfaces on street in Brooklyn

STAT

By MURRAY WEISS

IN THE LATE 1970s, Paul John Arthur owned a fledgling investigations firm in Croydon, England. Although he had few clients and lived in a tiny flat, he masqueraded as a top-flight detective with a lavish expense account.

For years, Arthur led a faceless, Walter Mitty existence. That changed in 1980 when he met a dapper intelligence operative from Belgium who wore expensive suits and paid his checks with big bills, according to law enforcement sources. Under the tutelage of the operative, Casimir Taviera, Arthur got the chance to act out his James Bond fantasies and travel throughout Europe, the Middle East and finally to the United States with Taviera.

The international travels ended on a nondescript street in the Gravesend section of Brooklyn Jan. 28, 1982, when Arthur was arrested while sitting in a rented Oldsmobile on Avenue X. An Uzi submachine gun was in his lap, a .45-caliber revolver and high-powered binoculars were within reach and there were burlap bags covering his license plates.

Arthur is serving a three-year sentence for weapons possession and could be free as early as next January. He has refused to talk with authorities, and has become the most mysterious inmate in state history.

WHILE HIS target may never be known, the Daily News has learned that investigators believe Arthur was hired by Taviera to kill a spy here—a spy who may still be operating.

"We are not toying with amateurs. We're talking about professional people who materialize from time to time," said a source close to the investigation.

"You only read about people like this in spy novels...but they do exist...in a strata above the one we know."

Since Arthur's arrest, law officers from three federal agencies—the FBI, the Secret Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms—and representatives of the Brooklyn district attorney's office have unearthed what they say is one of the most fascinating, and most frustrating, cases in years. They have traced Arthur and Taviera along the East Coast and across two continents.

And yet this intriguing tale had a humble beginning.

LAW ENFORCEMENT sources close to the case gave this account:

Arthur cruised Gravesend for several days before an elderly woman spotted his car on Avenue X, near W. 11th St., became suspicious and called police. At the Bath Ave. station, Arthur later said only that the cops who arrested him, Officers Ralph Chartier and Edward Sellig, "had their guns in their holsters and were mine if I wanted them."

Within hours, officers searched Arthur's room at the Holiday Inn near Kennedy Airport and found \$1,500 in cash, his heavily used passport and a photo of a man reaching for a banana on a tree. The man was Arthur's late father.

The next morning, agents and detectives fanned out in Gravesend to try to determine Arthur's target. They came up with Angelo Sepe, a suspect in the \$5.8 million Lufthansa heist at Kennedy Airport in 1978. Investigators went to Sepe's home near Avenue X and W. 12th St. and told him about Arthur. Sepe all but laughed that the

mob would hire a foreigner to kill him. "If he wanted to hit me, he had two good chances," Sepe said, explaining that he twice walked with his dog past Arthur.

"When my time comes, my own people will kill me," Sepe said. "My people would not go out of the country and hire a stranger to do the job. They'll hire someone close to me." Sepe already has survived one attempted hit.

AS THE LUFTHANSA suspect was being interviewed, authorities traced Arthur's weapons and Holiday Inn phone calls to Richard Potvin, a Canadian tugboat pilot and suspected international gun-runner living in Florida.

On Jan. 29, the day after Sepe was interviewed, Detective William Majeski, of the Brooklyn district attorney's office, and three federal agents, William Sedleckis of the FBI, Charles Hudson of the firearms bureau and Burt Steves of the Secret Service, went to Potvin's mobile home at 5909 S.W. 29th Court in Fort Lauderdale.

Potvin catapulted the investigation into a world of espionage and spies by introducing to the plot the mysterious French national, Taviera, whom he also knew as "Yvan."

Potvin said Taviera was a former French commando who traveled extensively, and lavishly, and that Taviera often boasted of smuggling guns to the Middle East and doing intelligence work. Investigators have since confirmed that Taviera is an intelligence operative for NATO countries. A warrant has been issued for his arrest on weapons charges.

CONTINUED